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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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4 February 1952

SUBJECT: NIE-27/1: CHINESE COMMUNIST CAPABILITIES AND INTENTIONS
WITH RESPECT TO TAIWAN

(Draft for Board Consideration)

THE PROBLEM

To estimate Chinese Communist capabilities and intentions with
respect to Taiwan through mid-1952.

ASSUMPTIONS

1. A truce has not been concluded in Korea.
2. Present US policy with respect to Taiwan will continue
through mid-1952.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Except for an increase in air capabilities, the over-all
capabilities of the Chinese Communists to launch either a large-
scale invasion or limited surprise attacks against Taiwan remain
substantially unchanged since April 1951 when NIE-27 was published.

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Chinese Nationalist capabilities to defend Taiwan have not improved substantially since that date.

a. A large-scale Communist invasion attempt would have little prospect of success unless surprise were achieved to assure a fait accompli before US air and naval forces could be brought to bear. Under present circumstances, the Communists could not achieve surprise in a large-scale attack.

b. A Communist attack with a limited number of elite troops probably could achieve surprise, but the Nationalists, without outside assistance, could contain such an attack, unless the Communists received large-scale reinforcements without delay. US naval and air forces could probably prevent such reinforcements.

2. There are no military, propaganda or other indications of an early large-scale invasion or imminent limited surprise attacks against Taiwan.

3. We believe that, under present conditions, the Communists will not launch a military attack of any type against Taiwan through mid-1952.

4. We believe that the Communists will probably continue their military operations against the small Nationalist-held off-shore islands during the next several months, but such operations would not necessarily indicate an imminent invasion of Taiwan.

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I. THE CHINESE COMMUNIST SITUATION

The Armed Forces

5. Army. Since April 1951, when NIE-27 was published, there has been no significant change in the estimated strength and effectiveness of Chinese Communist troops in position for a possible attack against Taiwan. (See Map)

a. Ground forces deployed along the mainland east coast opposite Taiwan (Chekiang, Fukien and Eastern Kwangtung Provinces) are estimated at 249,000.

b. There are approximately 151,000 troops deployed in the Canton and Shanghai areas that could be made readily available for operations against Taiwan.

c. This total force of 400,000 troops includes an artillery division, several thousand other specialized troops and possibly 20,000 to 25,000 paratroops.

d. This force is estimated to have a high combat effectiveness.

6. Air Forces. The over-all capabilities of the Chinese Communist Air Force for operations against Taiwan have increased substantially since the publication of NIE-27.

a. The combat potential and effectiveness of the CCAF have so improved that it is now a formidable military force. The total aircraft strength of the CCAF has increased from 650 to 1700 between April 1951 and February 1952.

b. The major part of the CCAF is engaged in operations against UN Forces in Korea and is based in Manchuria. However, it is estimated that there are 37 jet fighters based at Canton, 74 jet fighters at Hankow, 74 jet fighters and 40 piston fighters at Shanghai, and 80 light bombers at Nanking.

c. Of the air strength based in these areas, only the light bombers are within striking distance of Taiwan. Thus a major redeployment of aircraft probably would be necessary before the Communists could launch a large-scale air offensive against Taiwan.

d. In addition to the aircraft already based south of the Yangtze (see b above), the Communists could, without appreciable effect on their present scale of air operations in Korea, make available for an attack on Taiwan 120 piston fighters, 120 ground attack bombers and 160 light bombers.

e. During the past several months the Communists have continued their intensive airfield construction and

improvement program along the mainland east coast. There are now 35 first-class airfields within 500 nautical miles of Taiwan. Four of these are directly opposite Taiwan (near Foochow, Amoy and Swatow) and can support jet fighters.

7. Naval Forces. The capabilities of the Chinese Communist Navy for operations against Taiwan remains low.

Chinese Communist Capabilities for Large Scale Invasion

8. Waterlift. By using a heterogeneous assortment of shipping consisting of steamers, motor launches, motorized junks, and a few armed landing craft, the Chinese Communists could probably lift 200,000 troops. However, the troop capacity of conventional craft, such as landing craft and coastal steamers, probably is not more than 60,000.

9. Airlift. Chinese Communist airlift capacity is estimated to be sufficient to carry at least 2,700 troops a distance of 500 nautical miles in a single operation. Airfields on the mainland, within transport range of Taiwan, are sufficient to support large-scale airborne operations.

10. Logistic Support. The Chinese Communists would face serious logistical difficulties in supporting an assault against Taiwan.

a. Although the roads in the invasion coast area have been improved, there are no rail lines in Fukien, in

Eastern Kwangtung or Southeastern Chekiang. Thus, prior to a large-scale invasion attempt the Communists would have to stockpile materiel and deploy most of the troops required for such an invasion in the vicinity of the outloading ports to an extent not now accomplished.

b. Reinforcement and resupply of invasion forces would require a substantial daily waterlift and maintenance of air and sea supremacy in the Taiwan Straits.

11. Possibility of Surprise. Under present conditions it would be virtually impossible for the Chinese Communists to achieve surprise in a large-scale assault.

a. Even if transportation and storage facilities permitted necessary troops, shipping, and supplies to be assembled in the three port areas opposite Taiwan (Swatow, Amoy, and Foochow), such concentrations would be difficult to conceal.

b. If the Communists attempted to coordinate operations from widely separated points along the coast, there would be a 24-48 hour differential between the time of departure of assault forces from more distant ports (such as Shanghai or Canton) and that of forces from Amoy or Foochow.

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Chinese Communist Capabilities for Limited Surprise Attack

12. The Communists might estimate that, so long as the US is committed to the defense of Taiwan, surprise, leading to the capitulation of the Nationalists before US forces could be brought into the Taiwan area from Korean and Pacific outposts, would be decisive. The Communists probably could achieve surprise in an attack on Taiwan only if they utilized their airborne capability and their conventional landing craft for seaborne forces.

a. Although the Communists have an estimated 20,000 to 25,000 paratroopers, airlift capacity for an initial airborne operation is limited at present to approximately 2,700 troops. The element of surprise would be eliminated in any subsequent lift.

b. Conventional landing craft might accommodate up to 60,000 troops, but it is doubtful that even this force could be launched in secrecy. The practical capability for surprise with seaborne forces is probably limited to 20,000 to 30,000 troops.

II. THE CHINESE NATIONALIST SITUATION

Armed Forces

13. Ground Forces. There has been no significant change in the Nationalist Ground Forces since the publication of NIE-27.

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a. The Chinese Nationalist Army has a strength of 455,000 personnel. The bulk of these forces is disposed on Taiwan. Some combat elements are located on Matsu, Quemoy, and the Pescadores Islands.

b. Because of materiel and training deficiencies, absence of large unit and combined training, and the incompetent leadership on the high levels, the combat effectiveness of much of the Nationalist Army is poor. In addition, the Generalissimo's policy of divide and rule, the promotion of officers based on personal allegiance, and the system of political police continue to affect the morale of the armed forces adversely and to undermine the authority of unit commanders.

c. Under present circumstances, the mobilization capacity of the Nationalist Ground Forces is negligible.

14. Air Forces. In relation to the CCAF, the strength and combat effectiveness of the CNAF has deteriorated even below the low levels noted in NIE-27.

a. The Chinese Nationalist Air Force (CNAF) has 320 World War II-type aircraft in tactical units. Of these 118 are piston fighters and 36 light bombers and the balance are transport and reconnaissance aircraft.

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b. The principal deficiencies of the CNAF are the absence of jet aircraft, lack of combat experience and training, poor maintenance and shortage of equipment and spare parts.

c. The CNAF is not considered capable of providing an effective air defense for Taiwan.

15. Naval Forces. The capabilities of the Chinese Nationalist Navy have not improved over the low levels indicated in NIE-27. The Nationalist Navy would not be an effective deterrent to any type of Communist assault on Taiwan.

III. PROSPECTS FOR SUCCESS OF CHINESE COMMUNIST ASSAULT

16. A Large-Scale Invasion. The Chinese Nationalists, without outside assistance, are not capable of defending Taiwan against a large-scale Communist invasion attempt. We do not believe that this situation will change during the period of this estimate.

17. United States Armed Participation. The Chinese Nationalists supported immediately by strong US Naval and Air Forces could probably defeat Communist invasion forces.

18. Limited Surprise Attacks. The Chinese Nationalists without outside assistance are considered capable of containing and destroying Communist forces engaging in limited surprise attacks unless such forces were accompanied or immediately followed by a large invasion force.

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19. Communist Subversion. The Chinese Nationalists have reduced the Communist subversive potential on Taiwan to the extent that it would no longer constitute a serious threat even if coordinated with limited surprise attacks or a large-scale invasion.

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IV. INDICATIONS OF CHINESE COMMUNIST INTENTIONS WITH RESPECT TO
TAIWAN

Military Preparations

20. Early Large-Scale Invasion. Available intelligence on Chinese Communist military preparations does not indicate that a large-scale invasion attempt of Taiwan is likely before mid-1952.

a. There have been no indications of troop or equipment build-up in or near the outloading ports.

b. There have been no indications that the Communists are assembling a waterlift fleet. (In the spring of 1952 when an attack on Taiwan appeared probable, intelligence, including reconnaissance, reports revealed a Communist waterlift build-up over a period of months.)

21. Imminent Limited Surprise Attacks. Although limited surprise attacks could be launched with little warning, it is significant that:

a. There is no evidence that Chinese Communist paratroop units are fully trained or are deployed outside of Manchuria or North China.

b. There have been no indications of a significant deployment of Communist combat aircraft to make them immediately available for operations against Taiwan.

22. Future Attacks on Taiwan. There are several military developments that could indicate longer range plans for a Communist attack on Taiwan:

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a. The movement of jet fighters and light bomber aircraft from Manchuria and North China to such areas as Shanghai, Nanking, Hankow, and Canton could be for defensive purposes, but might also be an indication of preparations for a future attack on Taiwan.

b. The action already taken against small Nationalist-held islands (see Map) is probably only the first of a series of actions against the off-shore islands. This could be in preparation for an invasion of Taiwan, or could be for the purpose of denying the Nationalists bases for conducting guerrilla warfare and for any contemplated assault of the mainland.

c. The airfield at Swatow which has been unused for a long time is now reported as being rehabilitated and enlarged with the assistance of 200 Soviet advisers.

Propaganda Indications

23. Although Chinese Communist propaganda no longer includes the "liberation of Taiwan" as an early Communist objective, this cannot be regarded as decisive since the Communists probably would not feel compelled to justify their assault on Taiwan in advance as they did in the case of Korea. Actually, the Communists might attempt to conceal any indications of intent to invade Taiwan.

24. Recent Chinese Communist propaganda has evaded the question of invading Taiwan. Whereas the 1950 New Year's message of

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the Central Committee stated that part of the task for the coming year was to "liberate Taiwan, Hainan Island, and Tibet," the various messages in 1951 subordinated the question of Taiwan to the more general struggle against American "imperialism," and gave no assurance of any specific action against Taiwan during 1951. The 1952 official New Year's editorial cited Taiwan merely as a case of US aggression and made no reference to the island's "liberation." Chairman Mao's New Year's message for 1952 made no mention of Taiwan.

25. Although Premier Yoshida's letter to Mr. Dulles regarding the signing of a Japanese peace treaty with the Chinese National Government offered an excellent opportunity for comment on the issue, the retort given by the Communist Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs on January 22, 1952 avoided mention of Taiwan, and the general tone of the statement was directed against Japan and the US for uniting in "aggressive measures...against Korea and China."

26. That Pei-p'ing has not abandoned the "liberation" of Taiwan as an ultimate objective, however, is indicated by such statements as Chou En-lai's political report to the CPPC on 23 October 1951 when he declared the "Chinese peoples are determined to liberate Taiwan from the grip of the American aggressors and will never relax until they have achieved that end." However, this statement was made in the context of the Chinese People's "long term struggle to resist American aggression and aid Korea." The "liberation of Taiwan" has also been declared to be one of the objectives of Pei-p'ing's program of military modernization.

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Indications from Communist Activities in the UN

27. Soviet and satellite representatives in the UN demonstrated considerably less interest in Taiwan during 1951 than in 1950. The USSR repeatedly charged the US with plotting aggression against Communist China and Southeast Asia, including the transportation of KMT troops from Taiwan to Thailand and Burma, but these charges seemed to be a part of the general Soviet propaganda offensive, and not specifically designed to lay the groundwork for a possible invasion of Taiwan.

V. CHINESE COMMUNIST INTENTIONS

28. We believe that under present conditions the Chinese Communists will not attempt to invade or launch limited military attacks against Taiwan during the period covered by this estimate.

a. The US commitment to defend Taiwan presents the Communists with a situation in which an attack on Taiwan during the next several months would, at worst, result in a crushing defeat by US naval and air forces and, at best, involve Pei-P'ing in further costly military operations against US forces at a time when hostilities in Korea were continuing.

b. The Communists would probably also be deterred by the fact that US counteraction might not be confined to the Taiwan Straits, but might include bombardment of ports of embarkation, interior lines of communication, and air attacks on major urban

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and industrial areas throughout China. In view of the estimated probability that the Kremlin is reluctant to launch an early general war, considerations of possible US countermeasures would probably weigh heavily in a Communist decision to attack Taiwan.

c. It has been estimated that the Communists desire a settlement of the Korean war on a basis acceptable to them. As long as the Communists desire to continue the negotiations in Korea, political considerations would probably militate against either large-scale or limited military attack on Taiwan.

29. During the time period of this estimate the Communists may conduct reconnaissance, nuisance, or destruction raids (either by air or sea) against Nationalist-held off-shore islands and may assault and capture some of these islands. However, such action would not necessarily indicate by any means that an invasion of Taiwan was imminent.

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APPENDIX A

WEATHER CONDITIONS IN THE TAIWAN STRAITS

Period	General Conditions	Feasibility of Large-Scale Sea Operations
October thru March	Strong northeast monsoons, currents setting southwesterly through the Straits and reaching maximum drift of 60 to 65 miles per day in December and January.	Weather unsuitable for large-scale sea operations.
April thru June	Transition period between northeast and southwest monsoon; variable winds, light and variable currents setting generally northeast; high seas and swells observed 6-10 percent of time in April and May. Typhoon may occur in June.	April and May are best months for large-scale sea operations; there is risk of encountering typhoons in June.
July thru August	Southwest monsoon, average velocities low and calms frequent; sea and surf moderate. Typhoons move from Pacific due west across Taiwan into China.	Average conditions better than in April and May, but danger of typhoons makes this period less suitable.
September	Transitional period between southwest and northeast monsoon; typhoons may occur, winds are variable.	Period from late September through early October after typhoon danger is over and before strong northeast monsoon begins may not be too unfavorable for sea operations.

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